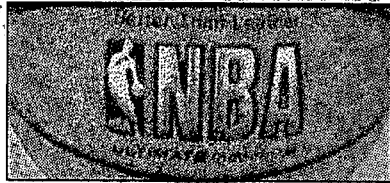


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Contaminants found

PCBs at South Plainfield site may have tainted waterways

 By SARAH GREENBLATT
 STAFF WRITER

Chemical contamination at a South Plainfield site could have consequences elsewhere in Middlesex County, particularly at a popular fishing spot in Piscataway, and area officials are calling for extensive — and speedy — testing of public waterways.

The discovery of high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, at the Hamilton Industrial Park has worried some officials that there could be a health threat to those who fish at New Market Lake in

nearby Piscataway.

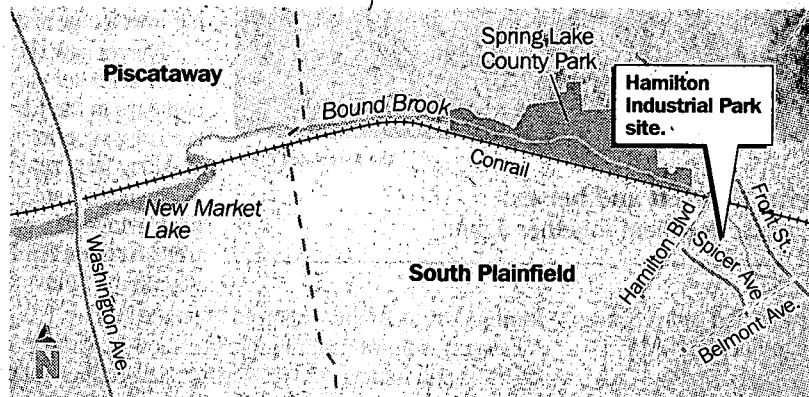
"We want to be certain that our citizens are not at risk," said state Assemblyman Bob Smith, D-Middlesex. "PCBs are dangerous materials."

High levels of PCBs were found by the federal Environmental Protection Agency on the 25-acre site, a portion of which is traversed by a tributary of the Bound Brook.

The agency is now poised to begin a study of the environmental impact of contamination that may have flowed into New Market Pond.

Depending on the extent of contamination found on the property and in the waterways, the EPA may place the site on the National Priorities List, through which it could qualify for an intensive, long-term cleanup.

A preliminary study of the industrial park revealed high levels of PCBs in



Staff graphic

sediments of the Bound Brook that were spot-tested by the EPA last year.

While federal guidelines set safe limits for PCBs at two parts per million, concentrations of the contaminants reached as high as 700 ppm in one of the sediment samples tested in the stream bed.

The EPA is ordering a cleanup of potentially hazardous levels of the contaminant also found inside seven of the 15 businesses now operating on the site; formerly owned by Cornell-Dubilier Electronics.

The study to be completed later this month will include testing of water and sediments in the brook and pond, as well as fish that live there, according to Eric Wilson of the EPA.

With results expected this fall, Smith said he will press for speedier answers from the agency.

"That's not good enough," Smith said, adding that people will be fishing all summer at the pond. "This is not something that the EPA can sit on."

 Please see **Site**, page **A2**

CANCER GATHERING Survivors share experience

 By IVETTE P. ALVARADO
 STAFF WRITER

In October 1995, the sun finally came out for then 8-year-old Alison Silfan. The leukemia that had plagued her body since she was 6 was gone and so were the chemotherapy sessions, the spinal taps, and the pain.

"I'm here and very proud to say I survived cancer," said Silfan, now 9, to a sea of 500 other cancer survivors and their families during a National Cancer Survivors Day

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SITE: Discovery of PCBs spurs calls for testing of waterways

■ Continued from page A1

PCBs cause cancer in laboratory animals and are associated with birth defects such as behavior disorders, said Bob Tucker, director of the Eco-Policy Center at Rutgers University Cook College.

Tucker said the contaminants are especially dangerous to humans because they become concentrated as they move up the food chain from small sediment-eating organisms, collecting in the fatty tissues of fish and other animals that feed on them.

"PCBs are nothing to be sneezed at in terms of their potential danger," Tucker said.

Should PCB levels in fish exceed two parts per million, the state may issue an advisory against fishing in the New Market Pond, said Bruce Ruppel of the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Ruppel said, however, that freshwater fish tend to accrue lower PCB levels than their salt-water counterparts, which possess more of the fatty tissue that absorbs the contaminants.

Because waters from the Bound Brook flow into New Market Pond, then on past Middlesex and Bound Brook boroughs before emptying into the Raritan River, the potential scope of contamination goes beyond South Plainfield, said Ralph Magliette, chairman of the Piscataway Environmental Advisory Commission.

"We haven't even talked about whether it could have discharged into Middlesex Borough or Bound Brook," Magliette said. "I don't know if it's been input into the Raritan River."

Magliette is urging the EPA to broaden its environmental study to include portions of the Bound Brook downstream from New Market Pond.

He said he also hopes the EPA will test dredge materials removed several years ago from the pond bottom and placed on the Harris Structural Steel site that straddles the township's border with South Plainfield.

The dredge materials were applied to a portion of the steel company's property which is now used for farming, Magliette said.

The area is leased by the Cornell Dairy, which grew corn and pumpkins there last year, according to Harris Steel spokesman Marvin Strauss.

In the absence of data indicating that contamination extends far from the tainted site itself, Magliette said there is no need for alarm.

"The jury is out until we have the data," Magliette said.

Wilson said the EPA will broaden its environmental study if the findings in the New Market Pond warrant it.

"The purpose of our investigation is to identify acute health threats," Wilson said. "We're not looking for long-term, chronic impacts. We're looking for things that are happening now."